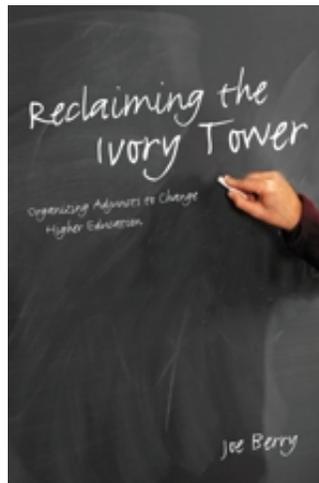
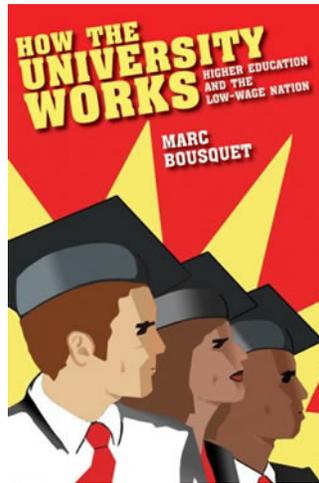


Louis Project: The Unrepentant Marxist

August 6, 2008

How the University Works; Reclaiming the Ivory Tower

Filed under: [Academia,workers](#) — louisproyect @ 6:08 pm



A couple of months ago I reviewed Frank Donoghue’s “[The Last Professors](#)“, a study of the disappearance of full-time tenure positions in higher education. This is a follow-up with two equally valuable books on the same topic. One is “[How the University Works: Higher Education and the Low-Wage Nation](#)” by Marc Bousquet that is distinguished by its grasp of the overall political economy that has encouraged an attack on teachers. The other is Joe Berry’s “[Reclaiming the Ivory Tower](#)“, a handbook for adjuncts who are trying to organize against the university power structure.

I feel a particular obligation in calling attention to these three books because there are hundreds of students on the Marxism mailing list or who read my blog that might be planning to become college teachers themselves one day. They should be aware that the profession is not what it once was. Considering the fact that most of them are probably humanities majors, they are particularly vulnerable to the attacks taking place there—much more so than

in business or the science departments. With the dissertation process amounting to a kind of ordeal, it is shocking to think that after 5 to 10 years of a very frustrating and isolated exercise of brainpower (as well as a major cash expenditure) that you will end up as contingent labor with no health benefits, no pension, no office and no guarantee of employment from semester to semester.

In his introduction, Bousquet compares the growth of contingent labor in academia to that of HMO's. In many ways, his outrage will remind you of Michael Moore's "Sicko". As chroniclers of the decay of American society during the epoch of downsizing, privatization and growing class differentiation, such social critics have their hands full. It is a boom time for both hedge fund managers and latter-day muckrakers.

In many ways, it is not surprising that a two tier system is developing in American colleges, with mostly older, white males in tenure positions and women in adjunct positions. This mirrors what has happened in a number of the old-line basic industries organized by the AFL-CIO that used to be a source of good pay and job security, even if under dangerous working conditions. The UAW, the Teamsters et al are glad to cut deals with the boss that preserve traditional wage and benefit structures for the older worker while allowing the younger ones to drift toward the bottom. The same thing is true in high technology with Microsoft relying heavily on contingent labor, thus prompting the same kind of outrage and activism now being manifested in the academy.

Being a drone in an administrative department of a major research university (Columbia) for over 17 years makes me less susceptible than other people to accept the myth of a benign nonprofit dedicated only to its students and the community. But I never dreamed that things could have reached such a stage before reading Bousquet. In chapter two, he discusses William Massy's "Virtual U", a "computer simulation of university management in game form" that was designed by a former Stanford vice president with a \$1 million grant from the Sloan foundation.

Trevor Chan, who designed "Virtual U", also designed "Capitalism," another game that the Virtual U website described as "the best business simulation game ever created." According to PC Gamer magazine, "Capitalism" is "good enough to make a convert out of Karl Marx himself." Bousquet points out:

Massy's game is a budgeting simulation. It draws upon two prominent strains of thought in contemporary university management, the "cybernetic systems" model of university leadership developed by Robert Birnbaum and resource allocation theory, specifically the principles of Revenue Center Management (RCM), of which Massy is a leading proponent.

The players of this game treat faculty, students and staff (like me) as inputs into the maw of management. If you play the game right, you can get maximum results from minimum input. In keeping with the mindset of the game's creator, there are no unions in the simulation.

In the next chapter, Bousquet uncovers more evidence of how the university has become a guinea pig for all sorts of "management revolution" theories like RCM-all calculated to enhance the power of the administration over everybody beneath them as it cuts costs ruthlessly, especially teachers' salaries.

Evidently, "Toyotism" has descended upon the university in a bid to emulate the "success" of the Japanese auto giant:

In addition to its cultural dimension, Toyotism represents a genuinely radical transformation of the work process, which most workers have experienced as profoundly dystopian. The core concept is of continuous

reinvention of the work process—often called, following Deming, “continuous quality improvement,” where “quality” means efficiency, so that managers are continuously being asked to improve efficiency, that is, to continuously produce more with lower labor costs...

In its academic version, the Toyotist work regime is supported by a triumphalist administrative literature—e.g., *Quality Quest in the Academic Process*, *On Q: Causing Quality in Higher Education*, *Continuous Quality Improvement in Higher Education*, the *Total Quality Management in Postsecondary Education* newsletter, etc.—as well as by a series of active financial and philosophical partnerships with legislators and corporate leadership, such as the multi-company 1988 TQM Forum, IBM’s 1991 TQM competition and its successor TQM University challenge, funded by Motorola, Milliken, Proctor and Gamble and Xerox, all of which provided major grants to universities adopting “Quality” initiatives, including prominent public research institutions such as Penn State and UW-Madison.

In order for these management initiatives to succeed, it is necessary to keep drumming into the heads of tenured faculty members that they are part of management. In this respect, it is essential for them to conduct classroom evaluations of adjunct professors on a regular basis. This device and others was crucial to a landmark Supreme Court decision that resulted in college professors being regarded as management, a key blow to trade union consciousness and organizing. In Appendix A of “How the University Works,” you can read the dissenting opinions by Brennan (supported by White, Marshall and Blackmun), which includes the following thoroughly uncontroversial observation:

The university administration has certain economic and fiduciary responsibilities that are not shared by the faculty, whose primary concerns are academic and relate solely to its own professional reputation. The record evinces numerous instances in which the faculty’s recommendations have been rejected by the administration on account of fiscal constraints or other managerial policies. Disputes have arisen between Yeshiva’s faculty and administration on such fundamental issues as the hiring, tenure, promotion, retirement, and dismissal of faculty members, academic standards and credits, departmental budgets, and even the faculty’s choice of its own departmental representative. The very fact that Yeshiva’s faculty has voted for the Union to serve as its representative in future negotiations with the administration indicates that the faculty does not perceive its interests to be aligned with those of management. Indeed, on the precise topics which are specified as mandatory subjects of collective bargaining — wages, hours, and other terms and conditions of employment—the interests of teacher and administrator are often diametrically opposed.

While I am no expert on trade union politics, it does strike me that this Supreme Court decision has had as much of an impact on the relationship of class forces in the U.S. as Reagan busting the airline controller’s strike. It strengthened already gestating anti-working class tendencies that have radically altered the academic workplace.

Those changes are most virulently evident in Louisville, Kentucky where a partnership between local colleges, including Bousquet’s U. of Louisville, and major corporations have created a virtual contingent labor nightmare.

Described in bloodcurdling detail in chapter 4 ([available on Bousquet’s website](#)), we discover how an outfit called Metropolitan College functions more or less like day labor hiring halls such as Office Temp or Handy-Andy. In exchange for tuition in a kind of earn-and-learn fashion, local students get to work in a UPS warehouse. Metropolitan College is a college in name only as their website admits: “Despite its name, Metropolitan College is not a college. It was established as a Louisville, Kentucky based partnership among Jefferson Community and Technical College, the University of Louisville and charter business partner UPS. This nationally recognized partnership provides eligible Kentucky residents access to a tuition-free post-secondary

education and outstanding employment opportunities.”

I bused tables briefly as an undergraduate, but my experience was nothing like this:

Rather than relieving economic pressure, Metropolitan College appears to have increased the economic distress of the majority of participants. According to the company’s own fact sheet, those student workers who give up five nights’ sleep are typically paid for just fifteen to twenty hours a week. Since the wage ranges from just \$8.50 at the start to no more than \$9.50 for the majority of the most experienced, this can mean net pay below \$100 in a week, and averaging out to a little over \$120. The rate of pay bears emphasizing: because the students must report five nights a week and are commonly let go after just three hours each night, their take-home pay for sleep deprivation and physically hazardous toil will commonly be less than \$25 per shift.

The contingent laborers at UPS do not get the wages and benefits of other workers covered by the Teamster’s contract. Despite a lot of hoopla about the UPS strike being conducted on behalf of all workers, the same pattern held as it did elsewhere in the traditional AFL-CIO bastions of heavy industry—a two-tiered system with older, privileged workers doing well at the expense of the younger ones. This is not the fault of the rank-and-filer workers, but the treacherous leadership so anxious to cut deals with the boss.

Although UPS and Metropolitan College have refused to release statistics, Bousquet is convinced that most students cannot keep up with the killing pace at UPS and quit their jobs before graduating, thus leaving them without the tuition benefit agreed upon initially. UPS gets low-cost labor as a consequence without having to pay the benefit, a perfect arrangement for a labor-hating company and the Toyotist college administrators.

The professors, who are barely a leg up from their students economically, have to go out to the UPS warehouse to meet with their students. One of them is Susan Erdmann, an assistant professor at Jefferson Community College. She and her husband belie the image of pampered academics:

With their combined income of around \$60,000 and substantial education debt, they have a thirty-year mortgage on a tiny home of about 1,000 square feet: galley kitchen, dining alcove, one bedroom for them and another for their two sons to share. The front door opens onto a “living room” of a hundred square feet; entering or leaving the house means passing in between the couch and television.

No matter how modest their living standard, they would be the envy of the adjunct professors below them on the food chain. Described as a “lumpen professorate” by Cary Nelson, the president of the American Association of University Professors, they now teach up to 75 percent of all college-level courses. Bousquet insists that this is the goal of the graduate education industry, to turn out contingent labor. Despite expectations that a PhD will lead to a tenure-track job, the real purpose is to supply labor that will hopefully exhaust itself after 10 years and disappear—to be replaced by fresh blood from graduate school. In this respect, the adjunct professors are not that different than the student-workers being super-exploited by UPS and their cohorts on Louisville campuses. Bousquet describes it this way:

The academic labor system produces degree holders largely in the sense that a car’s engine produces heat—a tiny fraction of which is recycled into the car’s interior by the cabin heater, but the vast majority of which figures as waste energy that the system urgently requires to be radiated away. The system of academic labor creates degree holders only out of a tiny fraction of the employees it takes in by way of graduate education: leaving aside the use of M.A. students as instructional staff, doctoral programs in the humanities typically

award the Ph.D. to between 20 and 40 percent of their entrants. And the system employs only perhaps a third of the degree holders it makes. Like a car's engine idling in the takeout food line, the system's greatest urgency is to dispel most of the degree-holding waste product.

While "How the University Works" is focused on the exploitative practices taking place on the college campus, Bousquet is by no means set on accepting this status quo. He is a tireless spokesman for the adjunct professors, graduate teaching assistants and students victimized by an ever-increasingly corporatized system. His [website](#) is a tremendous asset for everybody interested in these problems, including those of you who are currently working on a PhD or are planning to do so. I especially recommend his [youtube video interviews](#) with people involved in the struggle who through their willingness to stick with their profession are real testaments to the values of the university rather than the sharks who run it.

Joe Berry's "Reclaiming the Ivory Tower" has a first chapter that overlaps with the material found in Bousquet and Donoghue's much longer books and as such is a good introduction to the problem of contingent labor.

However, the main purpose is to offer practical organizing tips to non-tenured professors trying to build a union or enlist community support. Although I strongly urge everybody to purchase the Monthly Review book, I do want to point out that it seems to be based on Joe Berry's dissertation "[Contingent Faculty in Higher Education: An Organizing Strategy and Chicago Area Proposal](#)" that can be read at the Chicago [Coalition of Contingent Academic Labor](#).

This description of a "physical center" will give you a flavor for Berry's "roll up the sleeves" approach:

Yet another aspect for the center would be as a social center, using "social" in the broadest possible term, meaning a physically safe place where contingent faculty can come together and talk without fear. Very little of the literature on contingent faculty seems to fully acknowledge this aspect of their lives and needs, with the exception of the memoir horror story genre written by contingent faculty themselves. This would be a place where refreshments would routinely be kept and an open door to socializing would be maintained along with a facility for more organized and formal social events.

Another use of this center would be as a physical location for the information and resources accumulated by the research function mentioned above. This would then dovetail into another function of the center which would be as a site for labor education. It is one thing to go to on campus professional development workshops based on subject matter areas, the requirements of curriculum or the particular administrative needs of a particular institution... Included could be not just unionizing information, but also information about activity in and by professional and disciplinary organizations. Likewise, information here could serve to connect contingent faculty to the broader labor movement through literature and the use of local labor education programs, contributing to broader solidarity and consciousness.

Finally, this site would be a physical location that would be a node of solidarity, for meetings and as a meeting place for planning actions by the organization but also as a physical location that others in the community, in the labor movement, on campuses and the press would come to know as the place where the new majority college teachers, as a whole metropolitan group, could be contacted for information, for assistance, or for any other purpose.

When I read this, I was reminded of another such physical center from about 70 years ago. Sol Dollinger's "Not Automatic," a chronicle of the Flint sit-down strikes in which his wife Genora Dollinger played a leading role

through the woman's auxiliary, describes an organizing center in downtown Flint that had exactly the same combination of socializing and solidarity. Given the attempts by the ruling class to turn back the clock to the 1930s, it is not surprising that the labor movement will begin to hearken back to its own best traditions.

UPDATE

[A collection of reviews](#) of "How the University Works" on Marc Bousquet's website has just appeared.

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[Comments \(6\)](#)

6 Comments »

1. I suppose the same pressures are at work in state universities like Cal Berkeley. I wonder about private schools like Yale or Stanford, or Columbia.

Comment by plato's cave — August 6, 2008 @ [7:50 pm](#)

2. Hey Lou! Good (and personally relevant) article! Hmmm... The "physical center" idea also reminds me of the anti-war GI cafes during the Vietnam war.

Comment by Mike — August 6, 2008 @ [11:09 pm](#)

3. I think this is all a bit overstated. I know that at my school (a comprehensive state college) we are making a serious effort to reduce our dependence on adjuncts. Incremental progress in any given year depends on state budgets, but the effort has the full commitment of the administration from the Prez on down.

I also think that it is not true that full time folks are men and part time people are women. I don't know the precise numbers, but at my school the full time sex ratio has got to be pretty close to 50/50.

Community colleges are certainly different. I have no experience there.

The major problem facing most colleges is too few students. This problem will get worse with coming demographic trends, and more intense competition for the college-age individual. One does not recruit students by gratuitously screwing faculty and staff, by relying on part-time help, or by offering a lousy product. Thus I think the premise of the article – RCM, etc. – is just wrong.

And it is also surely true that the job market in the humanities is completely out of whack. Having said that, my school pays humanists as much as scientists (apart from a few disciplines, such as nursing, where the job market is out of whack in the other direction). However, humanists are surely partly to blame for this state of affairs – after all, if you spend 20 years chanting "hey, hey, ho, ho, Western civ has got to go," one shouldn't be surprised if people no longer take them very seriously.

Comment by [Dan King](#) — August 7, 2008 @ [7:09 pm](#)

4. Here is something to complement Louis's fine essay:

Lambs to the Slaughter

1. I do not think that many faculty members would challenge the notion that the University of Pittsburgh is run by persons who are primarily managers and not academics. Certainly those on the Board of Trustees are managers and often have much experience managing large corporations. Those employed by the Board, the Chancellor and his large staff, function as managers, although a few of them (and increasingly fewer each decade) have some reputation as scholars. At Pitt-Johnstown, where I work, our administrators have never been scholars and no more so than at present when the very titles so common to academe have been changed to reflect the managerial and business-like role those who hold these titles are expected to play. We do not go to the Dean's office but to that of the Vice President for Academic Affairs, or VPAA.
2. As any management expert will tell you, the essence of management is control, control over every aspect of the enterprise. In most workplaces, the one element which can impede the ability of management to control its domain is the human element. That is why managerial control is essentially a matter of controlling the organization's employees, or to use a word that college teachers don't like to hear, its workers. Over the past 150 years or so, managers have devised a number of techniques for managing (controlling) their employees. These techniques have been theorized and systematized, first by Frederick Taylor, and many times since by his disciples. It is possible to learn these techniques and the theory behind them in business schools, seminars, and learned journals. We must have no doubt that our administrators have studied the theory and practice of managerial control and that they are busy applying what they have learned.
3. The most comprehensive system of managerial control has been pioneered by Japanese automobile manufacturers and is known to its critics as "lean production." It is based upon the twin ideas that every aspect of work must be controlled to the greatest degree possible and that the employees must be led to believe not only that this is good for them but that they have some real say in directing their enterprise. With our faculty senate and its ideology of shared governance, many of us have already absorbed the second idea (Pitt-Johnstown President, Al Etheridge, has used "focus groups" which serve the same purpose and have the advantage of being controlled by him more directly than the senate, which on rare occasion challenges administrative authority). The first idea, however, is more radical, and poorly understood by most of us and not at all by many of us.
4. The control over work is necessary if management is to contain costs and enlarge the organization's surplus. There are many aspects to lean production, some of which need not concern us, at least yet, because they are impossible (at least so far) to apply to teachers. For example, the job of teaching college students is not as susceptible as are most other jobs to Tayloristic time and motion studies (But see historian David Noble's fine article, "Digital Diploma Mills," Monthly Review, Feb. 1998, pp. 38-52, for evidence that this is being considered). Nor is the utilization of "just-in-time" inventory, an innovation in which a firm keeps no stock on hand but rather has it delivered just as needed, usually by an outside contractor (Here again, however, the use of part-time teachers called upon just as needed, i.e. without advance notice, can be considered a form of just-in-time).
5. Those features of lean production which are applicable to teaching are the detailed division of labor, systematic hiring, stressing the system (what the Japanese call "kaizen" or constant improvement), and

mechanization. The use of the division of labor is based upon the “Babbage principle” after the mathematician and entrepreneur, Charles Babbage (inventor of the first computer). The idea is to substitute lesser-skilled (or cheaper) labor for skilled (or more expensive) labor whenever possible. This we see being done with a vengeance with the proliferation of part-time, temporary, non-tenure stream, and (in Oakland) graduate student instructors. As more expensive faculty retire or leave, they will be replaced whenever possible with cheaper and less secure people. For example, it makes no sense to managers that I teach two sections of Intro to Economics, a course which, from their point of view, can be taught by anyone minimally qualified. So when I leave Pitt, I will not likely be replaced with a full-time faculty member but with part-timers. The two other courses I teach each term can either be dropped, or if needed, taught by other part-timers or shifted to the remaining teachers on an overload basis.

6. Systematic hiring fits in nicely with the Babbage principle. The idea here is to hire people who can be easily controlled. Of course, most new teachers do not have to be controlled since they have already learned that they must behave themselves if they want to get tenure (this, in turn, is partly a function of the glut of new teachers brought about by the use of part-timers, temporaries, etc.). But part-timers and the like are, almost by definition, so insecure that they will not rock the boat, no matter what the administration does.

7. The two most important control mechanisms, in my view, are the stress now being placed upon our system and mechanization in the form of computers. On an automobile assembly line, stress is delivered by speeding up the assembly line, reducing the amount of materials available to workers, or taking a person off the line. Sooner or later, a bottleneck appears along the line, indicated by flashing lights. Then the management focuses attention on the trouble spot and the workers, usually grouped into teams, are expected to solve the problem, but without the stress being removed. When they solve the problem (by working faster, for example), management has gained a reduction in unit cost. Here at Pitt-Johnstown and no doubt throughout the University, the stress takes the form of recurring budget cuts (these are usually blamed on outside forces but are really the result of a well-thought out plan). We are then expected to continue to teach an increasing number of students with fewer resources. We are encouraged to believe that we must all pull together to get through the crisis, though a minute’s reflection would tell us that the crisis is permanent and has already consumed most of our work lives and that we suffer (as do all of the school’s other workers such as secretaries, maintenance and custodial, and food service employees) disproportionately to the top administrators who continue to draw the largest salaries and whose staffs continue to grow. We “alleviate” the stress by teaching more overloads, doing more class preparations, agreeing to larger class sizes, foregoing sabbaticals, never asking for release time, paying for our own conference trips, making fewer copies of articles, concurring with the hiring of more part-timers and temporary instructors, and so forth.

8. The electronic revolution confronts us with the most extreme assault on our traditional patterns of work. The handwriting is on the wall. The future will see more and more distance education, the cloning of lectures captured on video and sent out over the web, the forcing of faculty to put their courses online, increased electronic monitoring of faculty effort, and other such methods of substituting capital for labor. If you do not believe me, just read the Noble article cited above. Teaching as traditionally practiced is labor intensive and the labor is not especially cheap. These facts are inimical to sound business practice, so the obvious remedy is to replace us with machines, the prices of which have been falling for quite awhile. As Noble puts it:

Educom, the academic-corporate consortium, has recently established their Learning Infrastructure Initiative which includes the detailed study of what professors do, breaking the faculty job down in classic Tayloristic fashion into discrete tasks, and determining what parts can be automated or outsourced. Educom believes that course design, lectures, and even evaluation can all be standardized, mechanized, and consigned to outside commercial vendors. “Today you’re looking at a highly personal human-mediated environment,” Educom president Robert Heterich observed. “The potential to remove the human mediation in some areas and replace it with automation-smart, computer-based, network-based systems-is tremendous. It’s gotta happen.”

9. It is reasonable to ask why all of this is happening. The proliferation of administrative staff, the extraordinarily high salaries paid to top administrators and research faculty, the tremendous expansion of buildings, laboratories, and computing equipment suggest that it is not a true financial crisis which is to blame. Rather, I think that the universities have become centers of accumulation, or, to put it more bluntly, places in which a lot of money can be made. Universities today are more concerned about generating patentable research, often the basis for spinoff businesses owned by researchers and administrators, and the corresponding alliance with private corporations (which supply computer software and hardware, purchase the patentable research, form partnerships with researchers and administrators, and supply employment for the higher ups in the academy when they leave academe) than with anything else.

10. It may seem heretical to some for me to say it, but the University, in my opinion, has no sincere commitment whatever to the education of undergraduates. If it did, it would not be employing the lean production techniques outlined above, all of which are harmful to the production of educated human beings. If it did, it would not be implementing in Oakland a system of “differential teaching” in which those who don’t publish enough or bring in enough grants will be punished by being forced to teach more. If it did, it would not allow professors to “buy back” their courses by hiring part-timers to teach them (I was once hired to teach a course in Oakland by a professor who literally begged me to do it and who had never previously met me and knew nothing about my background.). Undergraduates are simply a major source of the large sums of money needed to convert the university from a school into a business. These expenses are the main reason why tuitions have risen by a much greater percentage than have prices for so many years. And now that further tuition increases are getting difficult to sustain, the university is coming after us, ruthlessly cutting the cost of instruction and pressuring us to work harder (I should note that some money has to be spent on students, mainly to entertain them. In addition, students must be led to believe that their “education” is the reason why their wages will be higher after graduation than they would have been had they not gone to college. It really makes no difference to the university and, sad to say, to most of them, whether they learn anything or not).

11. In the face of what is nothing less than an attack upon the craft of teaching, the reactions of the teachers are remarkably passive. Here at Pitt-Johnstown, some of us keep our heads firmly in the sand; a few of us have actually become cheerleaders for lean production. Others continue to rely upon the myth that it is Oakland which is at fault, not grasping the fact that our administrators are firmly positioned in the corporate hierarchy which is implementing all of these policies. If our administrators were really on our side, they would understand that in a war, the generals have to do more than make private pleas. They have to rouse the troops to action. If UPJ wanted more money from the University, it would try to put enough pressure on the University to get it. It would mobilize faculty, staff, and students to write letters, send emails, march and demonstrate in Pittsburgh and Harrisburg, raise a fuss in public meetings, and other such direct actions until the University capitulated. But, of course, this is unimaginable. No matter how odious our administrators might think a particular university decision is, they always go along. They know who butters their bread. The university has decided to try to break the union of maintenance and

custodial workers at Pitt-Johnstown over pathetically small sums of money (to the university, though not to the financially strapped and hardworking employees), a truly rotten thing to do, but not so awful that any of our administrators would take a public stand against it.

12. Probably the most common faculty response is cynicism. We distance ourselves from the college and refuse to participate much in its affairs. This is an understandable response; after all, the crisis forced upon us causes a lot of pain and anguish. But even as we are cynical, we do indeed continue to solve the pressures created by the continued stressing of our system. We do give up our sabbaticals; we do teach larger classes; we do pile on the overtime; we do not challenge our division heads when they tell us there is no money for anything; we act as if it is impossible to do anything about the shrinking of the tenure stream faculty. We are in worse shape than the lambs sent to slaughter. Unlike the lambs, we can think. We could resist but we do not.

13. What might we do? In the end, our only hope is to organize ourselves, both at our own workplaces and with teachers around the world. But for most faculty, this is too big of a step to take immediately. So, in the short term, perhaps we can do some things to show the administrators that we know what is going on and that we do not like it. First, we can begin to speak out, in meetings and in private conversations. When administrators say something ridiculous or simpleminded, we must challenge them. We can challenge administrative policies with speeches, with letters, with petitions, with emails, to them, to the media, to politicians, to board members, any way we can. Second, we can refuse to participate in our own demise. We can insist on our leaves and let the university turn us down (We just received a memo cancelling all sabbaticals for next year. So much for collegiality on this matter.). And we can appeal the decision and make it public. We can refuse to teach overload. We can refuse to give up our syllabi and resist any administrative prying into our classrooms. We can, at least if we are tenured, refuse to give student evaluations; if we do give them, we can refuse to show them to any administrator. These can only be used against us, as is also the case for our year-end dossiers, which, because the evaluation of them is subjective and based upon a personal weighting of numbers or entries, are totally manipulable. We can refuse to serve on committees, including those which hire new faculty members. Third, we can offer our support to any group on campus, such as students or other employees, who are resisting being sacrificial lambs.

14. Perhaps the cynics are right and nothing will come of any efforts we make on our own behalf. I do not believe this, and the history of resistance movements tells me that it is not true. But even if we accomplish little, at least we will stop living on our knees.

Michael Yates, University of Pittsburgh-Johnstown

by
Michael Yates

Comment by Michael Yates — August 8, 2008 @ [5:20 am](#)

5. personal correspondance for Louis:

Louis,

I wrote and produced a film called *Acts of Imagination*, premiered in Toronto at TIFF in 2006, then had its Asian premiere at Busan. It opened the “Revolutionary Blues” Film Festival in Chicago in 2007, and played in Kiev, among other festivals.

I enjoy your writing, both on film and on politics, and I want to send you the work. I’m not really sure why, I haven’t a clue if you’d like the piece, but you are the kind of audience member that I, as a filmmaker, wish to attract. We started to make it on a budget of 60,000 but that did grow with completion funds from Telefilm. You can get a bit more information at <http://www.actsofimagination.com>

Also, I’ve written the screenplay for the next film we (Carolyn Combs, the director and co-producer) want to make, called *Freeport, Texas*. If you’re willing to read it and comment, I would appreciate it. I would listen closely to you.

So, do send a snail mail address if the film and the screenplay might interest you.

I apologize if this seems in anyway pushy or ill-advised.

I mean it as a reaching out to the kind of critical thinking we need, and as a sign of respect.

Michael Springate
Vancouver, Canada
michael@actsofimagination.com

Comment by [Michael Springate](#) — September 7, 2008 @ 4:00 am

6. [...] that tenure has pretty much disappeared anyhow. I reviewed three books—*The Last Professors*, *How the University Works* and *Reclaiming the Ivory Tower*—that told a sad story about the inexorable replacement of tenured [...]

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